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Shades of Gray: A Novel of the Civil War in Virginia

Jessica James
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Confederate Captain Alexander Hunter wants nothing more than to put a stop to the slippery, fast-riding Yankee scout who has been reporting the maneuvers of Hunter's reconnaissance and re-supply missions to the enemy Union army. When fate hands him a chance to capture the scout, he finds himself facing a youth with only a swift-flowing stream between them, but when he urges his mount to ford the treacherous stream, Captain Hunter is thrown and rendered unconscious; he slips under the water and will surely drown.

Young Evans, Yankee courier, has a choice: leave the infamous Hunter to his fate or risk being captured by rescuing the drowning rebel. By reputation alone, Hunter could scarcely be categorized as a mere man. Here was a chance to forever end the notorious Hunter's raids on the Union army, but Evans can't do this. The scout rescues Hunter and this selfless act drives the pair into a journey that crisscrosses the terrain of a bitter and brutal war and propels them deep into the landscape of the human heart. In the tradition of the Revolutionary War's Swamp Fox, the young Virginia-born-and-bred Evans hides in plain sight, playing the righteous Southerner devoted to the Cause while collecting information vital to the Union army. However, the game is more perilous for this scout. Former Southern Belle Andrea Evans does not count on her loyalty to the Union being endangered by the sheer force of a man who is a legend among his contemporaries, respected and feared by the Union and loved with an unswerving passion by his countrymen; he is the gallant Hunter, or the devil Hunter—it was all a matter of geography.

Yet Hunter meets his match in Andrea Evans. Known as "Sinclair" to the Union army, she slips in and out of camp, comfortable with the rough conditions and at ease with the coarse language of the soldiers. Sinclair, or Evans, is herself legendary. She is severely injured more than once, but her devotion to the Union cause is never broken, not even when she succumbs to the man who is her equal. Likewise, Hunter's determination to protect his homeland is unwavering. Neither of them bends, yet the same stubborn, willful courage that fuels them both creates a bond that transcends the conflict.

Author James, a former newspaper editor, reporter, and avid historian, captures the pure essence of the war that nearly tore the heart out of the United States. Readers will find the attention to historical detail impeccable and the characters are so strongly drawn that the history does not eclipse the forward trajectory of the story.
CAROL LYNN STEWART (December 11, 2007)

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